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Eating Local as Public Art

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Abstract. In this paper, we bring together two unrelated strains of recent literature on eating local, which have respectively evidenced its socio-political and artistic values. Our argument contends that eating local can, in some instances, be regarded as a form of public art. Our study improves our understanding and appreciation of the complex web of culinary values linked to eating local, in particular the entanglement between its aesthetic, political, and cultural significance. We first review three extant definitions of eating local (§ 2), which we then employ to discuss the three specific forms of public art that eating local can occasion (§ 3), namely: memorial art, social protest art, and art that enhances. Finally, we present the links between the three approaches to local food and the three forms of public art (§ 4), providing a heuristic framework for both scholars and stakeholders.

Keywords: Local food, Public art, Food and philosophy.

1. INTRODUCTION

To celebrate the work and life of the renowned artist Ana Mendieta, the curator Su Wu and the chef Thalios Barrios Garcia organized an exhibition in a new public art space, *La Clínica* in Oaxaca (Mexico), which included a brunch where traditional, seasonal, and local food were served. The guests *wandered* from the exhibition room to the bar, consuming local food while appreciating local art in a public space. The purpose of the convenors was to create a singular exhibition where the work of Mendieta, the environment, and the food by Garcia merged in a unique artistic experience¹.

The exhibition in Oaxaca is one among a seemingly growing number of art events that bestow upon food a key role in the sphere of public art. Jointly taken, these occasions implicitly bring to mind the thesis recently advanced by Borghini and Baldini (2021), which claims that cooking and dining may be regarded, in some instances, as forms of public art. In their work, Borghini and Baldini offer a

¹ See Furman (2021) for a detailed description of the event.

wide variety of case studies that substantiate their claim, distinguishing three forms of public art that may arguably be realized through cooking and dining: memorial art, social protest art, and art that enhances. Developing Borghini and Baldini's perspective, in this paper we study whether *eating local* (or, equivalently, locavorism, or local food), i.e., the thesis that consuming and producing local food has a value, can be considered, in some instances, as a form of public art.

In recent years, eating local has acquired a relatively prominent role in public and scholarly discussion on the ethics and politics of dieting (e.g., Borghini, Piras, & Serini [2021a]; Enthoven & Van den Broeck [2021]; Kim & Huang [2021]; Noll & Werkheiser [2018]; Pollan [2008]). In particular, since eating local bears special ties to geographical space – as the Oaxaca exhibition witnesses – it can be used as a means to convey site-specifically, intimate, and internal values of specific interest to a community².

At the same time, a second unrelated research agenda brought to light the aesthetic worth of eating local. In fact, several examples of haute cuisine – which may be considered as a form of art *per se*, e.g., Trubek [2000] – employ local items (see, *inter alia*, Sammels [2014]). Furthermore, when the aesthetic paradigm does not rely on traditional forms of artistic appreciation, which exclusively looks at fine dining, also more ordinary and widespread instances of eating local may be considered as forms of art (e.g., Matthen [2021]) and, as we will argue, able to elicit culinary values.

Bringing together the two unrelated strains of research, in this paper we argue that eating local can, in some instances, be regarded as a form of public art. Thanks to this conjoinment, the study will improve our understanding and appreciation of the complex web of culinary values linked to eating local, in particular the entanglement between its aesthetic, political, and cultural significance. Using the expression “culinary values”

we mean all the values that may be linked to a food or a food experience, which extend beyond the gustatory aspects, to encompass also political, ethical, broadly aesthetic, and cultural dimensions (see Englisch [2022]).

In the remaining of the paper, we first rehearse three extant definitions of eating local (§2), to then return to the question of whether it can be regarded as a form of public art. We address this question in terms of specific case studies of eating local as memorial art (§3.1), social protest art (§3.2), and art that enhances (§3.3). Finally, we present the conceptual links between the three approaches to eating local and the three forms of public art (§4), delivering nine different typologies of eating local as forms of public art, summarized in a table. We conclude that understanding eating local through the lens of public art can best highlight its culinary value providing a useful tool for policies and strategies aimed at promoting worthwhile instances of this entanglement.

2. EATING LOCAL AND ITS VALUES

Eating local stands for a wide family of views according to which those foods associated to a locality embody a special aesthetic (Adams [2018]), communitarian (Schnell [2013]), nutritional (Caspi et al. [2012]), economic (Feenstra & Campbell [2014]), ethical or political value (Sebo [2018]) and – in recent years – has acquired a key role in public and academic debate on sustainable and more equitable diets (see Noll & Werkheiser [2018] for a systematic review).

However, at the same time, the legal and commercial norms regulating the uses of the term “local” are seldom clearly specified. As a result, “local” is used in a variety of different, sometimes mutually opposing, ways, and can be readily abused, in culinary and business contexts. For illustrating this wide range of different applications of the term, consider when “local” is predicated of renowned Swiss chocolates, in spite of its cocoa beans coming from South America. At the same time, a bread made of ingredients originat-

² See, for instance, Trubek (2008) on the connection between winemaking and local values; Paxson (2012) on the creation of local values through food production.

ed from New Jersey and consumed in New Jersey may be “local” even if it slavishly follows the original Greek recipe of pita bread. Or, an apple grown next to the place of consumption may be “local” regardless of the size of the farm and of the methods of production.

In Borghini, Piras, and Serini (2021a), we provided some conceptual tools to face value-laden discussions of local food and eating local. First of all, we recognize that “local” can be predicated of quite different culinary items. A non-exhaustive list includes: (a) whole food, i.e., determinate edible items that can be consumed alone, e.g., vegetables; (b) ingredients, i.e., the components of a recipe, e.g., the flour used for making up a pasta; (c) recipes, i.e., specific ways of selecting, cooking, combining, and processing the ingredients, e.g., the recipe of Pita; (d) menu, i.e., the structure of meals, e.g., sharing food by placing it on a common flatbread at the center of the table as in the Ethiopian cuisine; (e) diets, i.e., typical consumption patterns, e.g., the Korean Diet.

Second, we suggest that each of the items falling under categories (a)-(e) may be “local” from at least three approaches, which are respectively distance-driven, terroir-driven, and socially-driven. These approaches are not mutually exclusive, but are often mutually alternative, so that a specific item, say a Pita, may be considered local under one of the approaches but not under another³. As they are relevant for our analysis of eating local as public art, we shall briefly review them.

According to the distance-driven approach, a food is local if and only if it is consumed at less than some fixed distance (usually between 150 and 400 miles) from its production place. This approach is usually endorsed to foster healthier and more sustainable diets due to its lower rate of pollution (e.g., Pollan [2008]). However, since the distance between producers and consumers

has been arbitrarily decided, there is not a unique standard, thus determining incongruences and struggles (see Borghini, Piras, & Serini [2021b]). Furthermore, different transportation conditions may render shorter distances less sustainable than longer one, e.g., producing tomatoes in Northern Europe is more polluting than transporting tomatoes from Spain to, say, London. This criticism may undermine the sustainability motivations underlying this approach on eating local (Navin [2014]).

According to the terroir-driven approach, eating local should be understood as the edible expression of a given territory, its physical features, as well as its traditions, habits, and lifestyle. Hence, a food is local when it owns specific qualities directly attributable to the specific environment, climate, know-how, and techniques of its original place (e.g., Champagne properties are supposed to be determined by the features of the homonymous French region). However, as we have shown elsewhere, these attributions are theoretically far more complex to substantiate than it may appear at first sight, due to the complex identity of products (Borghini [2014a] and [2012]) and recipes (Borghini [2022], [2015], and [2011]); e.g., the fact that the ingredients of traditional local foods are sometimes produced in distant geographical regions, as it is with Swiss chocolate or Italian coffee. Moreover, several local food stories have been proved to rest on invented traditions (Nowak [2019]; Guy [2003]).

According to the socially-driven approach, eating local is a placeholder for the social and political engagement between the various agents involved in the food chain. Hence, a food is local when those agents hold significant and close links among each other, e.g., they know each other personally, share the same political beliefs or the same concept of public good (for a recent example, see Ho [2020]). However, how to measure, or at least define, these social ties is far from being clear. Moreover, the relation between producers and consumers is at risk of being asymmetrical, as they may not share the same definition or perspective of locality; thus, for instance, a tourist buying food from a city market may perceive it as “local” in

³ However, in spite of their wide popularity and established endorsements (see Furrow [2016]: 40), all these three approaches suffer from specific criticisms variously stressed in the literature (see, *inter alia*, Ferguson & Thompson [2021] for a recent review).

terms of kilometeric distance, while the farmer may perceive it as non-local based on the social divide between the farmland and the city (for a further discussion, see Borghini, Piras, & Serini [2021a]).

As just showed, each of these three approaches is subject to a specific range of criticisms. Nonetheless, in keeping with our previous works (Borghini, Piras, and Serini ([2021a]; [2021b])), we maintain that eating local can still play a significant role in policies, ethical beliefs, and aesthetic evaluation. To work properly in these contexts, the concept (understood from any of the three just mentioned approaches) should meet four desiderata: (i) gradability, i.e., the concept should come in degrees in order to include foods which are more or less local; (ii) width, i.e., the concept of eating local should cover as many items as possible; (iii) negotiability, i.e., the concept should be negotiated among the various actors involved in the food chain (e.g., producers, consumers, suppliers, vendors, institutions) in order to have a definition shared by the largest group of potential users; (iv) fallibility, i.e., each approach on eating local should be referred to a specific context of utterance and agency relying on theoretical and empirical frameworks without the ambition to be universal. Thus, for instance, a terroir-driven approach may be useful when defending the intellectual property rights of local communities, being gradable (e.g., distinguishing foods more or less traditional), wide (e.g., including recipes of African migrant communities rooted in a new European landscape), negotiable (e.g., by considering the opinions of all stakeholders), and fallible (e.g., being aware of the constitutive contextuality of the locality conditions for a food which may not be suited for a different environment).

Having set the terms for a discussion of eating local, we shall now turn to the question of why eating local can represent a genuine form of public art.

3. LOCAL FOOD AS PUBLIC ART

Our argument that eating local can be a form of public art draws on the analysis of cooking and

dining as forms of public art proposed by Borghini and Baldini (2021). Their thesis relies on four major theoretical moves: a deflationary model of art; a social model of artistic appreciation; Hein's three famous conditions for public art; and Wolterstorff's classification of the different forms of public art. Let us briefly review each of them as a way to introduce our discussion.

Piggybacking on Lopes (2014), Borghini and Baldini endorse a deflationary model of art, which breaks down the traditional artistic boundaries, including those between major and minor arts and those between art and artisanship. Such a model has been employed to date to analyze multiple forms of artistic expression that generally dwell at the outskirts of the main art scene, such as street art and social protest art (see, *inter alia*, Baldini [2019], [2018]; Riggle [2010]; Korza, Bacon, & Assafeds [2005]). Accordingly, Borghini and Baldini's stance – in line with that of other authors who have examined the aesthetic worth of food (see, for instance, Saito [2008] and Perullo [2016]) – employed this model for enlarging the boundaries of public art to include fine and ordinary forms of cooking and dining.

Second, when it comes to food, the received scholarship has typically adopted an “individualistic model of appreciation,” which underestimates the role of food within the public sphere. Instead, Borghini and Baldini endorse a social model of appreciation, arguing that food constitutively underlies and builds upon social networks as an object of interaction and discussion, contributing to shaping (and sometimes challenging) the received social categories (e.g., gender, race, or class).

Third, Borghini and Baldini's argument relies on the three conditions for public art laid down by Hein (1996), namely: *accessibility*, i.e., a public artwork should be accessible as one of its constitutive properties, at least in principle⁴, even if not for

⁴ “Accessibility” is not by itself synonymous of “inclusive,” but it is limited to providing the possibility of access to every one, in principle. Targeted policies for improving inclusivity should arguably be discussed along with accessibility, as the literature on public art museums demonstrates (for a start, see Sharp et al. [2005]).

free, e.g., museums or restaurants; *having a public theme*, i.e., a public artwork has to be about public meanings, concerns, or institutions proper to a given community (e.g., a statue against the war or a performance which memorializes a past foundational event); *eliciting a public response*, i.e., the public should be engaged in a way that contributes to the construction of its collective identity (e.g., the collective emotion caused by the celebration of a nefarious event)⁵.

Fourth, Borghini and Baldini suggest that cooking and dining fit at least three distinct types of art (see also Wolterstorff [2015]: 55): memorial art, social protest art, and art that enhances. Borghini and Baldini provide an ample number of instances of dining and cooking occasions that meet the conditions of each of those types, but they do not pay close attention to eating local. Nevertheless, as we stressed in the introduction, the social and political role exerted by eating local in the past few years, along with its communitarian nature (e.g. Nabhan [2002]) as well as its celebrated aesthetic dimension (e.g., Bertolli & Waters [1995]; Petrini [2001]), make it an ideal candidate as a putative form of public art. Elaborating on these considerations, in the following three subsections we argue that specific instances of eating local can be regarded as forms of memorial art, social protest art, and art that enhance. In the last two sections, drawing on these discussions, we will argue that seeing eating local under the interpretative lens of public art could be a good viaticum for consolidating its culinary values as well as its role as a political tool.

Most of our examples will be based on Italian case studies since this study is carried out by an Italian research unit within the context of a consortium funded by the European Union (4EU+ Project). However, as long as we think that our framework can be used even beyond the Italian

borders, in section 4 we offer other examples that span across different countries and contexts.

3.1 Eating Local as Memorial Art

The first form of public art taken into account by Borghini and Baldini is memorial art, namely – following Danto (1998) and Wolterstorff (2015) – artistic ways to publicly celebrate, honor, or enable persons, groups, or events which played a significant role for the collective memory of a specific community. Borghini and Baldini put forward an essential overview of different typologies of cooking and dining as forms of memorial art, which ranges from banquets to honor retired colleagues to entire national or regional culinary traditions, convivial occasions, and restaurants which, they argue, are able to shape collective memory. All these typologies are characterized by the aim to keep alive a link with the past (e.g., the career of the colleague) by honoring this memory in a public sphere (e.g., the banquet which is open to the old and new colleagues of the retiree).

A paradigmatic case in point of local convivial occasions which essentially involve local community and, at the same time, shape and display its identity, memory, and tradition through food are the Italian *sagre paesane* (folk food festivals). These festivals are popular events held in many Italian cities and villages organized by local institutions or organizations (e.g., *Pro Loco*, namely, local agencies appointed to defend and promote the local cultural heritage). *Sagre paesane* are usually set along permanent or temporary pedestrian zones where assorted food trucks or stands can show and sell local products to tourists and residents. In some cases, private residences or reserved zones of commercial activities are open to the public and featuring performances held by local producers and cooks who show and teach local ways of cooking and dining to the visitors (e.g., the Italian national event *Cantine Aperte* where wineries are open to the visitors for tasting local wines)⁶.

⁵ It should be said that Borghini and Baldini acknowledge that such an account may have shortcomings and that each condition needs to be carefully understood in order to fit deflationary approaches to art. Our discussion of local food aims to highlight some possible amendments and adjustments.

⁶ See the official website of the national organization <<http://www.movimentoturismovino.it/en/home/>>.

The local ways of cooking and dining as forms of memorial art at the core of *sagre paesane* play a multifarious role in relation with collective memory and identity: they can revitalize a common background, celebrate an enchanted and mythical past or heroic individuals, shape a public imagine to be offered to the outsiders, set the local communities apart from nearby towns, other Italians, and foreigners (see Di Giovine [2014] for an thorough analysis of the case of Pietrelcina in Campania).

To better appreciate the role of *sagre paesane* as forms of memorial art, consider the case of *Cortes Apertas* annual local festivals which have taken place in up to 31 villages in Barbagia, the innermost region of Sardinia, each Autumn since 1996. On these occasions the courtyards of private homes are open to the public for exhibiting how to make, consume, and enjoy traditional local foods. The activities of making and eating local food performed by residents become a way for proudly presenting to the others their own identity and traditions in curated and, sometimes, fictional forms. In fact, as Mannia (2008) argued in his anthropological analysis of the phenomenon, the wide visibility and reach of *Cortes Apertas* have led local communities to re-create their identities in order to match exotic and fictional representations which can best meet the taste and the expectations of tourists. However, *Cortes Apertas* have given a way to local Sardinian communities for deciding what of their cultural heritage must be preserved and how to display it to the outsiders. In fact, *sagre paesane* in general, and *Cortes Apertas* in particular, represent a privileged way for fostering local control over traditional ways of cooking and dining by conferring to local communities the power to showcase or recreate their own gastronomic and cultural identity, celebrating, time to time, say, the conditions of the first agro-pastoral communities, or the worship of local saints linked to fertility, or the celebration of *balentes*, i.e., local heroes. This explicit attempt to construct a tribute to the past by means of cooking and dining – even at the cost of *artificially* making them more fascinating and palatable – in order to keep alive and build a shared memory,

makes *Cortes Apertas* suitable to be considered as forms of memorial art.

3.2 Eating local as social protest art

In their work, Borghini and Baldini (2021) follow Wolterstorff (2015) in defining social protest artworks as those which represent unjust states of affairs, shifting the empathy of the audience from targeting victims in a fictional situation to those who suffer in the real world. They provide a number of examples of forms of cooking and dining, which enable the onlookers or the diners to experience feelings and emotions that should push them into embracing the struggle of the people that the artwork is about. Specific instances of eating local may well take on this role involving the diners in a specific process of critically reviewing the current food system or letting them feel empathy for people caught up in tough situations.

A worthwhile illustration of eating local which promotes this kind of goal is the community garden and social agriculture project *Semino-Alimentare Positivo* in Bologna⁷. The project is carried out by non-European immigrants who grow some of their typical vegetables (e.g., okra, daikon, turmeric, cowpea) near the city of Bologna selling them through an e-commerce platform⁸.

The project aims to use food as a proxy for achieving two social changes: (i) using food products for making Bologna people more aware of cultures and traditions of immigrants who have now become permanent residents of the city. In fact, the consumers may acquire new knowledge on how immigrants live in Italy and how they can be integrated in the Italian food and economic system by buying and consuming the vegetables from Semino, sharing flavors, narratives, and gaining insight into histories and traditions; (ii) endorse a specific and more encompassing approach on local food that includes products

⁷ <<https://www.semino.org>>.

⁸ The platform's name is Local to You and it can be retried at the following link <<https://localtoyou.it>> (last accessed February 21, 2022).

originally from foreign countries which, nevertheless, may become local due to the proximity between production and consumption places and the role played by the producers within the host society.

Through the daily interactions of its participants involved in a political agenda of integration, the *Semino-Alimentare Positivo* project enables processes that may be seen as a form of social protest art, where consumers choose to take part in economic and culinary performances.

3.3 Eating local as art that enhances

Sometimes, art is a means to elevate an activity, often an undesirable one, enhancing the condition of its participants. The repertoire of work songs that are linked to the origins of blues is a famous case in point, as they were born out of the hard toils of plantation work. In their analysis of cooking and dining as forms of public art, Borghini and Baldini offer the example of homemade pasta as a form of art that enhances.⁹ While pasta preparation serves the basic need of feeding someone, in certain instances it also leads to an act of creativity and craftsmanship. The toils of women preparing food for their families are enhanced by the beauty of the final product as well as by the possibility of sharing stories. The display of dexterity confers dignity to the workers; it also renders the final product unique and recognizable, bestowing upon the pasta a symbolic value of distinction. The artistry embodied in the pasta, and in the pasta making, enhances, thus, both the producers as well as the consumers.

As we shall show, also some local ways of cooking and eating can provide interesting instances of how artistic value enhances either producers or consumers while holding a specific link with a locality. To illustrate we will set forth two kinds of examples: recipes and specific dining places.

The first kind of examples includes all those recipes whose invention or realization require a

link to a place and which are able to enhance the creativity, the moral status, or the existential conditions of producers or consumers. For instance, the chef Massimo Bottura (2017), assembled recipes conceived by renowned chefs and that use bread leftovers. This use of local and poor ingredients – oftentimes the only ones available in that specific place – prepared and cooked for making them more palatable and enjoyable is common to many different culinary traditions. A nice case in point is *spaghetti alle vongole fujute* (literally: spaghetti with clams that have fled from the dish), a typical Neapolitan recipe made with sea stones which should season the pasta evoking the flavor of clams. This recipe, made up with miserable and non edible ingredients, enhances its makers, who obtain the best from just a few stones, and its consumers, who can experience a nice flavor in spite of their economic condition.

The second kind of examples regards those places where the gastronomic experience happens. Some of those places are able to improve the diners' experience in virtue of their specific design or way of dining. For instance, consuming *Venetian's cicchetti* – small typical dishes traditionally served to accompany a glass of white wine – in *Bacari* – typical Venetian places to eat and drink – is an occasion for locals to experience simple dishes of the “low” table in a setting that facilitates social and communitarian exchanges and, at the same time, enables non-locals to encounter local forms of consumption and tastes while enjoying the company of Venetian people.

4. PUBLIC ART, EATING LOCAL, AND ITS CULINARY VALUES

To knit together the different arguments we have laid out, it is useful to offer a brief recap. In §2, we have shown that eating local, in all the three readings of the concept – the distance-driven approach, the terroir-driven approach, and the socially-driven approach – and in spite of their critical respects, can still foster political, cultural, social, and ecological values. Then, in §3, we argued that eating local can fall under three dif-

⁹ Borghini and Baldini make the specific example of Pasta Grannies (<<https://www.pastagrannies.com/>>).

ferent forms of public art – memorial art, social protest art, and art that enhances. In this section, we bridge these two results showing that considering, promoting, and valuing eating local as a form of public art offers a missing frame that is pivotal in promoting the political, cultural, social, and ecological values proper to each of the three approaches. More specifically, the intersection of the three approaches to “local” with the three forms of public art delivers nine typologies of eating local as public art, which we sum up in a schematic form in Table 1. Disentangling these typologies – we argue – is a first step in advancing extant policies and analyses of the value of eating local. We demonstrate the viability of this claim by offering real-world examples.

The spatial-driven approach assigns the status of local food to all those foods that are consumed at less than some fixed distance to their production place. Considering eating local under this view as the expression of a social protest art can more clearly bring to light one of its political meanings. In fact, many local food systems aim to set up and reinforce the social protest against the neoliberal and capitalistic societies by means of short distance, fresh, tasty, and healthy food sold directly to customers while, at the same time, promoting virtuous models of civic agriculture (e.g., DeLind [2002]), questioning established bias and discrimination, and fighting inequalities to food access (Alkon & Agyeman [2011]). A clear example is offered by the framework of Community Food Security (CFS) adopted by 125 organizations (Morales [2011]) which uses forms of eating local as tools for bringing together the community – including also marginalized black sub-groups – for collectively addressing hunger and malnutrition. In fact, a local community can learn more about itself and embrace shared goals while rejoining in the pleasures that ably prepared local foods can provide to them. Mastering the art of cooking local foods, in cases like this, provides thus a means to achieve and perfect forms of social protest.

Furthermore, some other specific instances of eating local framed by CFS, as outlined by

Morales (2011), can also be considered as forms of memorial art. For instance, Tohono O’odham Community Action’s “Traditional Food Project” in Sells, Arizona, which has rehearsed the consumption of local wild food and the exploitation of monsoon rains for farming (see Hoover 2014). CFS frameworks like this comply with our understanding of eating local as a form of memorial art promoting food products meant to connect the diners to their cultural roots through the rediscovery of a flavor which should commemorate their ancestors in the context of their authentic land¹⁰.

Furthermore, certain local foods systems endorsing the spatial-driven approach well represent forms of art that enhance. For instance, sometimes the production of local food is also tied to the farming and development of specific botanic species whose consumption may increase and improve community health. Thus, this conjunction (local food and the growing of specific kinds of plants) can enhance producers (who play a quasi-medical role in the community) as well as consumers who can benefit from the consumption of those plants (see Lucan [2019]).

The second approach considers as local food all those foods which enjoy a special link (historical, cultural, ecological) with their production places, regardless where and when they are consumed. Their explicit connection with a tradition rooted in a specific place make them best suited to be forms of memorial art. Consider, for instance, *Fiambre*, a traditional Guatemala salad which is prepared and consumed each year for collectively celebrating the Day of the Dead and the All Saints Day. This dish enables and solemnizes a special day for worshipping the dead, even when it is consumed far away from its original location, e.g., by migrant communities, playing the role of public memorial artwork for the Guatemalan people across the world.

This second approach seems to paradigmatically include those forms of eating local which

¹⁰ Note that what authenticity means in relation to food is questionable and we are not taking any stance to its meaning. For an analysis, see Borghini (2014b).

play the role of social protest art, as in the case of those communities which use the defense of some specific local food against the market requirements, emphasizing their role as vehicles for delivering values “rooted in the territory” which cannot be exploited for serving non-local goals. For instance, *Vignaioli Resistenti* (resistant winemakers) is an organized group of winemakers in Perugia who started fighting against the privatization of Perugia’s covered market for then advancing differentiated forms of food activism. Their aim is to promote ethical winemaking and marketing, through the rhetoric and narratives of terroir which, according to them, should embody sustainable practices as intrinsic values in order to protect traditional knowledge as well as the work of the insiders (Ascione et al. [2020]). In fact, arguably, while non-sustainable farming methods may squander the local cultural heritage, appreciating and preserving the aesthetic qualities of local products can be a feasible way for defending and fostering collective patrimony .

In addition, some foods linked to terroir well represent clear examples of art that enhances. For instance, making and sharing the traditional Indonesian dish Tumpeng, a bunch of finely cone-shaped rice served with other side dishes, conveys religious and philosophical meanings, thus enhancing a proper sense of terrestrial as well as spiritual community. The shape of the rice in the dish, in fact, represents the verticality of God, while the wide variety of side dishes stand for the different Indonesian communities as well as natural elements (e.g., chili represents fire). Hence, sharing this dish enhances the diners going beyond mere nourishment insofar as it involves them in a religious, communitarian, and philosophical ritual (see Radix [2014]).

Finally, the third approach deems as local food all the products resulting from production and distribution methods meant to shorten the social distance between the various actors involved in a food chain. Also here, the lens of public art can enable scholars and stakeholders to appreciate local political goals. For instance, consider the newly established series of restaurants in the USA

– such as Dooky Chase’s in New Orleans (Harris [2011]) – which are trying to recollect and revive the African American cuisine uncovering its roots that trace back before the deportation from Africa. These restaurants can be seen as forms of memorial art entangled with a socially-driven approach to eating local. In fact, of course, the new chefs cannot rely on the same ingredients of the first African Americans. Yet their recipes and dishes may be considered as local since they create, and sometimes recreate, a strong link between different generations of African Americans as well as members of other ethnic groups, building shared memories, strong sense of community, and future common goals. That is, under this approach, some dishes are able to memorialize the past by fostering novel links between younger and older generations.

A socially-driven approach to eating local may also be better appreciated when seen as a form of art that enhances. For instance, the restaurant *Oriental Experience* in Venice offers dishes from different Eastern culinary traditions with the goal of spreading the common knowledge of non-Western cultures as well as telling the individual stories of migrants who came to Italy in quest for a better future. What is crucial here is the epistemic transfer of knowledge that takes place in the restaurant through the sharing of recipes and their stories, enhancing learning as well as facilitating inclusiveness.

Finally, on some occasions, this approach may be understood as a form of social protest art. For instance, the whole local food movement in Hong-Kong should be understood as «a cultural critique to neoliberalism, developmentalism, and consumerism in a costly city» (Ho [2020]: 2). The food prepared, delivered, and sold by the members of this movement in Hong-Kong is local only in virtue of the relation between the various – often international – actors since it is sometimes produced far away from Hong-Kong: it, nevertheless, delivers and conveys local values, such as friendship, loyalty, and social proximity explicitly criticizing a process of compulsory financialization and globalization of local food chains.

Table 1. Nine typologies of eating local as public art.

	<i>Distance-driven approach</i>	<i>Terroir-driven approach</i>	<i>Socially-driven approach</i>
<i>Memorial art</i>	Tohono O'dham Community Action's "Traditional Food Project"	Fiambre, traditional Guatemala dish	Dooky Chase's in New Orleans
<i>Social protest art</i>	Community Food Security	Vignaioli Resistenti, Perugia	Hong-Kong activists
<i>Art that enhances</i>	Medical local food	Tumpeng, traditional Indonesian dish	Orient Experience, Venice

5. CONCLUSION

In our paper, we have accomplished a twofold goal: first, we have argued that eating local *is* public art, in some instances, and, second, we have offered a framework for distinguishing nine different typologies of eating local as public art. Such a framework advances the scholarly discussion on the values of eating local by pointing out an unnoticed entanglement with studies of public art. Moreover, the framework provides a handy tool for stakeholders, including policy-makers, artists, chefs, and the public, opening new avenues for thinking strategies to adjoin food and art policies and discourses.

The potential impact of our claim that eating local is sometimes a form of public art are numerous and we cannot review them all here. We limit ourselves to list three areas of implementation. First, our study suggests that strategies for promoting local eating in a region, municipality, or neighborhood are *de facto* also strategies for supporting forms of public art. Not only the two strategies should be seen as going together; but, based on the nine typologies we offered, stakeholders could assess such strategies based on the types of eating local that they are willing to promote. Thus, for example, Bonotti and Barnhill (2022) contend – through the case of Eaton Mall in the suburb of Oakeigh, Melbourne – that eating local can sometimes play an important role

in promoting zoning policies; our paper suggests an elaboration of Bonotti and Barnhill's study, according to which zoning policies should be seen, in suitable instances, also as policies promoting public art in a neighborhood.

A second area of implementation is offered by policies promoting eating local for attracting tourists in a given region, municipality, or neighborhood: our study suggests that they can be viewed, in suitable instances, as policies promoting public art. For instance, during the Kimchi Festival in Seoul, residents and tourists are involved in a collective effort for the preparation of an enormous amount of kimchi (around 165 tons) – the so-called “kimjang,” which is part of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. As reported by ABC news, a non-resident festival-goer said «it is a meaningful event because people gathered here to make kimchi not for themselves but for those who cannot afford to make kimchi (...) I would like to try making kimchi when I go back to my own country as well». Our study suggests that such collective forms of local eating and cooking together, while fostering tourism as well as other forms of soft powers related to food, can also bolster shared public artistic endeavors helping in memorializing ancient traditions and disseminating their existence¹¹.

A third area of implementation concerns strategies for supporting eating local as a form of cultural heritage in a given region, municipality, or neighborhood: seeing selected local eating venues as access points for experiences of public art can open up new avenues for supporting these two seemingly unrelated and important aspects of civic life. A useful example is represented by “Soul Food Pavilion,” an artistic event which took place in Chicago in 2012, which was a sequence of five public meals inspired by the African American tradition of soul food, led by the artist Theaster Gates. The main idea of this happening was to reflect on and celebrate the culinary tradition of the African

¹¹ On this event, see <<https://abcnews.go.com/International/165-tons-kimchi-made-annual-seoul-festival/story?id=58918912>> (last accessed February 28, 2022).

American community in Chicago, spreading its still underrepresented richness and meaningfulness to new generations while trying to create new links and stress its artistic value¹². Our study may be useful for better grasping the artistic as well as social and political role of the shared heritage delivered through local forms of eating and cooking¹³.

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¹² See the full description of the happening here <<https://www.instituteforpublicart.org/case-studies/soul-food-pavilion/>> (last accessed February 28, 2022).

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